



# THE BRIDGE

## Support for Grieving Children & Teens

### What is The Bridge?

The goal of our Bridge program is to provide grief support in a safe, nurturing environment where grieving children and teens can process the death of a loved one using art, play, journaling, music and conversation. The Bridge uses a peer-based support model which relies on sharing between participants with similar experiences to help children understand that they are not alone.

- The Bridge meets the first and third Wednesdays of the month throughout the school year from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm.
- Each 90-minute session is conducted by facilitators specifically trained to work with grieving children and teens.
- Each child must have an adult on site while in attendance. An optional support group for parents and guardians is offered at the same time.

### The Groups

**Children & Teens are divided into the following developmental age groups:**

Primary School, ages 5-10

Middle School, ages 11-13

High School, ages 13-18

Each group is led by two or more facilitators who offer the children opportunities to express their feelings, share memories, and learn healthy coping strategies. During this time, the children engage in expressive arts play.

### Group for Parents & Caregivers (optional)

Parents and caretakers are encouraged to participate in a simultaneous support group which offers insights on child grief and what their children may be experiencing. These groups allow caretakers to learn how to best help their children during their grief, as well as process their own. Our experience is that if parents are being supported in their grief, they will be better able to support the children. Parents who choose not to participate in the adult group must remain on the premises, as each child must have an adult on site while in attendance.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### How much does it cost?

Hospice East Bay's grief support services are offered to the community free of charge. As a nonprofit organization, we rely on contributions from families and the community to cover the costs for each child and teen. We invite families to make a tax-deductible monthly pledge that they can afford. The pledge is entirely voluntary. No family is ever denied services because they cannot contribute.

#### How long after the death does a family need to wait before calling?

A family can call and start the process for participation as soon as they are ready. We believe each child and family grieves differently, and the family is the best judge of when they are ready to participate in a grief support group.

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Combining art and music as a means of expression, the children created their own drums that included a secret note to themselves inside the drum.

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### **Is there a waiting list?**

Not usually. We do our best to accommodate the growing interest in the program.

### **How long is a family expected to attend?**

We believe in the uniqueness of each individual's process of grief. Children and families choose when to start and when to stop attending. When a family is enrolled in a group, we expect regular attendance. A family is expected to call if they must be absent. Continuity is important to building the peer group into a supportive environment for the grief work.

### **What if a child or teen needs private therapy?**

The Bridge does not provide private therapy or counseling. However, upon request we can offer a list of therapists who counsel children, teens, or adults with grief issues.

**For more information, please contact The Bridge coordinator at (925) 887-5678. Visit our website for all of our children's grief support offerings.**

## **“Bill of Rights” for Bridge Participants**

### **Each member has the right:**

- to confidentiality
- to feel safe
- to express themselves in any way they choose
- to cry
- to share without being interrupted
- to say “no” or “pass” on any activity
- to speak privately with the facilitator after the meeting
- to leave the program when they feel ready

*(This is an excerpt from the Bill of Rights developed by participating teens at The Dougy Center - [www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org))*

### **How do we get started?**

1. Contact Hospice East Bay Grief Services and request information about The Bridge grief peer support groups. A staff member will gather some general information about the family and then send you a link to confidential assessment and registration form.
2. Once the registration form is received, the Bridge Coordinator will contact you for a brief assessment to insure that your child will be placed in the appropriate group.
3. After this initial phone assessment, participating family members are invited to attend an Open House to meet the facilitators, discuss the program and ask questions.

**Our next Open House is  
August 25, 2024  
Bridge Sessions will begin  
September 4, 2024**